

***Iowa Outdoors***  
**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
**[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)**

**Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653**  
**[mick.klemesrud@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:mick.klemesrud@dnr.iowa.gov)**

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**IOWA DEER SEASON BEGINS SATURDAY**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The first segment of Iowa's shotgun deer season begins Saturday, December 6 and continues through Wednesday, December 10. The second shotgun deer season runs from December 13 through December 21. An estimated 130,000 hunters are expected to participate in the seasons.

Powerful, wary, and elusive, the white-tailed deer is North America's most popular species of big game. Whether you judge them in terms of body size or in inches of antler growth, there is no denying that Iowa white-tails grow to monstrous proportions. Legends of the Fall, Iowa's behemoth bucks have gained global admiration. There are few places on the entire continent where deer grow bigger or better than they do right here at home.

So how big are our deer? To date, Iowa has produced 19 of the all time top bucks ever recorded. That's more top deer than is currently listed by any other state or Canadian province.

## **DEER TISSUE SAMPLE COLLECTION LOOKS FOR CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE**

CHARITON - Since 2000, Iowa has conducted an annual monitoring program testing wild white-tailed deer and, when possible, deer and elk killed on preserves, for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). In 2002, the intensity of the monitoring program was stepped-up when CWD was detected in wild deer populations of Wisconsin and Illinois in counties close to the Iowa border. Iowa's program is an important part of the national CWD surveillance and monitoring effort.

In 2007, the DNR collected 4,233 samples from wild deer of which, 4,191 were suitable for testing. Tests conducted by the National Veterinary Services Lab in Ames indicated that none of the samples showed any signs of the disease. Since 2002, the DNR has submitted tissue samples from approximately 25,000 wild deer, and none have tested positive. No wild or captive animal has ever been diagnosed with CWD in Iowa.

Samples are collected in all 99 counties with the emphasis for tissue collection being placed on seven Mississippi River border counties from Allamakee County south to Scott County. This region is emphasized due to the proximity of CWD in Wisconsin and Illinois. About two-thirds of the samples were collected in this area during last year's hunting seasons. A wild deer harvested this fall in Wisconsin about 25 miles from the Iowa border tested positive for CWD, making it the closest confirmed case to date.

About 90 percent of the samples were collected from the heads of hunter-harvested deer that were voluntarily submitted by sportsmen at check stations, meat lockers, and hanging sheds. The remaining 10 percent of the samples were collected from road-killed and specifically targeted animals.

The DNR intends to gather a similar number of samples this hunting season and Iowa's shotgun seasons are the prime time for collection due to the large number of hunters in the field and the resulting harvested animals.

CWD is a brain disease that can infect deer, elk, and moose and is classed as a spongiform encephalopathy. The disease is caused by an abnormal protein agent called a prion that causes normal proteins of the brain to take on a different shape. This causes microscopic holes to form in the brains of infected animals. The disease is always fatal, although it may remain dormant within an infected animal for long periods of time. In the later stages of the disease, animals will appear severely emaciated, lethargic, and display repetitive behaviors. Excessive thirst and salivation, tremors, extreme behavioral changes, and drooping head and ears are also often displayed. Anyone observing a deer displaying these symptoms should immediately contact the Iowa DNR.

To date, there is no evidence that humans can contract CWD by eating venison. However, the National Institute of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that hunters, and especially hunters hunting in areas where CWD is known to occur, do not eat the brain, eyeballs, or spinal cord of deer, that hunters wear protective gloves while field dressing game, and bone out meat for consumption.

Further information is available at the Iowa DNR website <http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files/CWDindex.html> and at <http://www.cwd-info.org/>.

Hunter participation in this monitoring effort is completely voluntary and the DNR thanks all hunters who are willing to assist with the CWD surveillance effort by providing deer heads for testing.

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Tom Litchfield, state deer biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources at (641) 774-2958

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### **Deer Hunting Q&A:**

#### **Spike Buck Reporting on Antlerless Licenses; Worn or Unreadable Tags; Where do I Attach that Tag; Read on for the Answers...**

Each fall many hunters find themselves dealing with situations which are unfamiliar to them and concerns arise as to how to handle them. Often hunters ask is it okay to tag a spike buck with an antlerless-only tag and how such an animal should be reported. First of all, any buck with that does not have a forked antler is considered to be an antlerless deer by definition and it is perfectly legal to tag it with an antlerless-only tag. When reporting the deer the hunter will be given the choice of designating it as a doe, button buck, shed-antlered buck, or antlered buck. Obviously, a spike buck is not a doe or a shed-antlered buck, and a button buck either has hair-covered bumps about the diameter of a dime or nickel on its head or hair-covered bumps with a 1/4-3/4 inch of exposed bone that forms a small point on top of the bump that is the developing pedicel from which future antlers will grow. So the only category that fits a spike buck is **“antlered buck”** and that is how these animals should be designated when reported regardless of the type of tag they have on them.

A worn or unreadable tag and how to deal with it is a fairly common question from hunters and also one that is fairly easy to correct. If you discover that your tags are no longer legible before you are out in the field you can take them along with your license to an ELSI dealer and have duplicate tags issued to replace the illegible ones.

Tags can be kept in good condition if they are kept in a license holder or zip lock bag and carried in a day pack or some other place where they are not regularly exposed to moisture or sweat. Tags that have resided in your wallet through the summer or early fall can easily become worn.

If you discover you have a worn transportation tag while in the process of tagging your deer, or if the tag becomes unreadable while on the deer, it can still be dealt with and the deer reported as required. The information needed to report your deer is also on the harvest report tag, if it is unreadable too, the nine-digit registration number for the tags is on the deer hunting license that was provided along with the tags (the license is less likely to become worn). The registration number should then be written on the tag(s). With the registration number, the hunter can then report the deer in a normal

fashion and place the harvest report tag on the animal along with the Confirmation Number to complete the reporting process.

A tagging requirement that is new for 2008 requires a hunter who kills an antlered buck (by definition, a buck with a forked antler) to place the Transportation Tag on the animal's antler. It is recommended that the tag be placed on the antler beam either at the base or between two points. This new law was passed by the Legislature during their last session.

Hunters who take their deer to a processor or taxidermist have questioned how they are supposed to transport the deer carcass if the tags are on the antlers and the head has been removed from the animal in preparation for transport to the processor or has been retained by a taxidermist. In this situation the hunter would place the Transportation Tag on the animal's antlers and the Harvest Report tag on the leg of the deer (or carcass).

Hunters who have multiple deer licenses for the same season are reminded to look carefully at their tags to make sure they are using the correct tag **before** attaching it to their deer. Hunters with multiple antlerless-only licenses also need to make sure that they are using the tags that are valid in the county in which the deer was killed.

It is mandatory that all harvested deer must be reported using the harvest reporting system by midnight the day after the deer is recovered or before taking it to a locker, taxidermist, processing it for consumption, or transporting it out-of-state; whichever comes first.

This is the third year where hunters have reported their kill and it is a very important part of the deer management program in Iowa, playing a vital role in managing deer populations and providing hunting opportunities. Hunters can report their deer on the DNR website ([www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)), by calling the toll free reporting number (1-800-771-4692), or also at a license vender. For hunters with Internet access, the online reporting of the harvest is a quickest and easiest way to register your deer and hunters are urged to try this method.

The DNR often receives questions regarding the free and reduced fee deer licenses that are available to resident landowners and tenants (LOT deer licenses) of lands operated for agricultural purposes. In order to be eligible for LOT deer licenses certain requirements must first be met and the parcel(s) must be registered with the Iowa DNR and this can be accomplished either online or through the mail. The registration must be renewed every three years with a maximum of five LOT deer licenses available for the parcel(s) depending on the county location(s) of the land. One LOT any-deer license is available with the remaining LOT deer licenses being antlerless-only (the LOT antlerless-only licenses are not tied to any county quota). More information can be found in the current hunting regulations, by visiting

[http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files/lot\\_contact.html](http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/files/lot_contact.html), or by calling 515-281-5918.

Information on upcoming hunter safety courses can be found on the DNR website at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/law/hunter/education.html>.

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Tom Litchfield, state deer biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources at (641) 774-2958

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## **SAFETY STRESSED DURING SHOTGUN DEER SEASONS**

DES MOINES - As Iowa's largest group hunting season approaches hunters are encouraged to brush up on their safety and to bring a new hunter along to share the hunt and help keep the great Iowa tradition alive. Being a mentor has never been so important to the future of hunting.

As the shotgun deer seasons quickly approach, Megan Wisecup, recreational safety programs supervisor for the DNR, wants to remind hunters to be safe and aware of their surroundings as they head out to the field this weekend.

“The number one cause of deer hunting related incidents in Iowa is shooting at running deer. Hunters become fixated on their target and forget to identify a safe backstop and what is beyond their target,” Wisecup said.

Wisecup said hunters should keep the following safety items in mind.

- **Blaze Orange.** Make sure to at least have the minimum required amount of blaze orange on at all times. Hunters are to often mistaken for game when the appropriate clothing items are not worn. Brown jackets, hats, and pants are often mistaken by hunters for a deer. Remember, you want to be seen from all sides.
- **Plan your hunt, hunt your plan.** Know where all members of your hunting party are at, at all times. Be especially careful when hunting in heavily wooded areas or uneven terrains. It is easy for another hunter to be out of sight.
- **As cold weather settles in and hunters spend more time in their vehicles,** remember to keep the gun unloaded and cased at all times. It is easy for hunters to forget this important safety issue when moving from one location to another or simply sitting in the vehicle to warm up. The trigger of the firearm could easily get caught on an item in the vehicle causing it to discharge creating damage to the vehicle or injuring a person. One of the most common citations issued during deer season is having a loaded firearm or uncased firearm in the vehicle.
- **With the recent snowfall and dropping temperatures hunters need to remember to exercise caution when traversing the icy terrain from one hunting spot to another or when retrieving game.** Not only are hunters at risk for falling and discharging their firearm but it is also possible for hunters to fall and get an obstruction in their barrel. Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and keep the safety on until ready to shoot. If at all possible unload the firearm when moving to a different location or while retrieving game.

Looking back over the 2007 hunting season, the self inflicted injury and property damage incidents were fundamental mistakes and most were, as always, preventable. As the 2008 hunting season draws to a close, take a moment to remember the fundamentals and keep hunting the safe activity it has become.

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Megan Wisecup, Recreational Safety Programs Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-238-4968.

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## **ICE FISHING UNDERWAY ACROSS NORTH IOWA**

**CLEAR LAKE** - Ice fishing is already beginning at Clear Lake and other lakes across north Iowa. With cold temperatures predicted for the remainder of the week, ice anglers by the thousands should be drilling this weekend.

Although many lakes in central Iowa are freezing, the ice is not thick enough for fishing. Anglers should allow the cold temperatures to add ice thickness.

There is usually a “hurry up” mentality among ice anglers who want to get out on the first ice of the year because it usually has some of the best fishing success of the season. But anglers are encouraged to test that ice early and often as they set out.

“Different factors can influence the rate of ice forming on the same body of water so it would be wise to test the ice thickness frequently as you head out,” said Mick Klemesrud with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “Ice thickness is not uniform on any body of water and there is no such thing as safe ice. There is always risk associated with going out on ice.”

There are a few safety tips ways to keep anglers on the right side of the ice. The first tip is to use your judgment and trust your instincts. If the ice does not look right, don’t go out. Another tip is to follow others footsteps when going out.

Anglers should also include a few ice rescue items in their fishing bucket, like 50 feet of rope and ice picks, and to sit on a throwable float cushion that can be used in the case of emergency.

“One thing we really don’t like to see is when a lake freezes then is covered with a blanket of snow that will actually insulate the ice slowing the cold weather from growing ice and it can hide potential hazards or weak spots,” Klemesrud said.

Anglers should also avoid any off colored ice or dark areas of ice which can both be signs of weakness or dangerous ice.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources follows the general guidelines tabulated by the Lumbermen’s Safety Association and other sources and should be considered minimum thickness guidelines.

One inch of ice is not safe.

Two inches of ice can support on person on foot, under good conditions.

Three inches of ice can support a group in single file or spread out.

Four inches supports general use.

Five inches for snowmobiles.

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Mick Klemesrud, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-281-8653.

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[Electronic photo available upon request]

## **EASY WINTER BODES WELL FOR PHEASANTS**

BOONE - There has been a lot of concern by Iowa sportsmen over the lack of pheasants in the Hawkeye State this year. There is talk of too many predators, not enough habitat and the hunting seasons are too long. These factors can all play a role in pheasant numbers, but the biggest factor in this past year's low pheasant numbers is weather.

"It always amazes me how easily people discount weather as a factor that can influence wildlife," said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "Our pheasant population got walloped by the tenth worst winter in state history in 2007-2008."

Cumulative snowfall averaged close to four feet in most areas which is almost twice normal levels. The winter was especially long in the southeast half of Iowa. DNR models suggest hen losses likely approached 70 to 80 percent in eastern Iowa. The winter of 2007-08 was followed by the wettest spring in state history which reduced the nest success of the hens that did survive the winter.

"Iowa's upland game birds could really use a mild winter to speed their recovery. Unfortunately we have had two significant snow events already in November, which does not bode well for a mild winter," said Bogenschutz. Weather predictors are calling for a slightly colder winter than normal with about normal snowfall. With normal winter snowfall, Bogenschutz estimates about 25 to 30 percent of the hen population is lost, which would be a big improvement over last winter.

However, in a mild winter the hen mortality may fall as low as 10 percent. "It'd be nice to see a mild winter to maximize the survival of the hens we have. Road ditches in north central Iowa have already drifted full in many areas and the forecast calls for more snow later this week," he said.

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-432-2823.

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## **VOLUNTEERS OFFERED REPRIEVE FROM THE HOLIDAY FRENZY**

DES MOINES —With the holiday season here, Keepers of the Land, the volunteer program with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), offers many statewide opportunities for volunteers to take a break from the hectic holiday pace.

- **Brush Trimming and Removal Opportunity:** Officials at Big Creek State Park, near Polk City, are seeking volunteers to assist with trimming brush along roadsides and utility boxes. Volunteers are also needed to rake up trimmed brush and haul it to designated locations. Handsaws and loppers will be used for this opportunity and will be provided. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending the project completion. For more information contact Kim Olofson at 515-984-6473.
- **Artist Opportunity:** Members of the Friends of the Pine Creek Grist Mill, at Wildcat Den State Park near Muscatine, are, seeking volunteers to assist with creating artwork which will depict the history of the grist mill and its builder, Benjamin Nye. Volunteers must provide their own art supplies and do not have to be onsite to complete the artwork. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending artwork completion. For more information contact Ken Hyman at 563-262-9040.
- **Woodworking Opportunity:** Officials at Lake Manawa State Park, near Council Bluffs, are seeking volunteers to assist with various construction projects including building and repairing picnic tables and building kiosks and park signs. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending project completion. For more information contact Don DeLong, Matt Veon, or Dan Jacobs at 712-366-0220.
- **Sorting, Updating, and Organizing Project Opportunities:** Officials at the DNR's Air Quality Bureau, in Urbandale, are seeking volunteers to assist with various projects that require filing, sorting, updating, and organizing. On-site training will be provided. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending projects' completion. For more information contact Jason Marcel at 515-281-4873.

Find more information about volunteer opportunities and events at [www.keepersoftheland.org](http://www.keepersoftheland.org).

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at [Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us](mailto:Merry.Rankin@dnr.state.ia.us).

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